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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 13 TOKYO 001711

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3) Prime Minister's Official Residence (Kantei)

Prime Minister's schedule, July 27

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
July 28, 2009

07:31 Took a walk around his official residence.

09:59 Met Japan Federation of Hire-Taxi Associations Chairman Masataka Tomita at the Jidosha Kaikan in Kudan-minami.

10:39 Met Japan Federation of Used Car Dealers Associations Chairman Minoru Sawada at Aioi Insurance Shinjuku Bldg. In Yoyogi.

11:26 Returned to the Kantei.

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13:18 Handled paperwork at the Imperial Hotel.

16:16 Returned to the Kantei.

17:22 Met Yamaguchi Gov. Nii and Yamaguchi Prefectural Assembly Chairman Shimada, in the presence of Chief Cabinet Secretary Kawamura. Kawamura stayed on.

19:28 Dined with LDP Election Strategy Council Deputy Chairman Suga at a restaurant in Toranomon.

21:09 Returned to his official residential quarters.

4) Poll: DPJ down to 30 PERCENT in public preference for proportional representation, LDP flat at 15 PERCENT

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Full)
July 28, 2009

Ahead of the forthcoming election for the House of Representatives, Kyodo News conducted a telephone-based nationwide public opinion survey. In this pre-election poll, the Democratic Party of Japan (Minshuto) dropped 5.5 points from the last poll taken July 18-19 to 30.7 PERCENT in public preference for proportional representation. However, the Liberal Democratic Party leveled off at 15.6 PERCENT. The LDP is still in a difficult situation, while the DPJ remained over 30 PERCENT. "Undecided" accounted for 37.4 PERCENT (34.7 PERCENT in the last poll).

In the poll, respondents were also asked what form of government they would like to see after the election. In this public preference of government, a "DPJ-led coalition government" inched down from 39.3 PERCENT in the last poll to 38.6 PERCENT in the poll this time. An "LDP-led coalition government" rose from 14.8 PERCENT to 18.6 PERCENT. A "new framework through political realignment" was almost flat at 19.4 PERCENT (20.8 PERCENT in the last poll). However, an "LDP-DPJ grand coalition" was at 11.6 PERCENT (16.7 PERCENT in the last poll). The figures show the spread of public consciousness about choosing either the LDP or the DPJ.

In the public preference of political parties for proportional representation, the DPJ and the LDP were followed by the Japanese Communist Party at 5.0 PERCENT (3.4 PERCENT in the last poll), the New Komeito at 4.9 PERCENT (4.2 PERCENT in the last poll), the Social Democratic Party at 1.1 PERCENT (1.2 PERCENT in the last poll), the People's New Party at 0.9 PERCENT (0.1 PERCENT in the last poll), the New Party Nippon at 0.1 PERCENT (no response in the last poll), and other political parties or groups at 0.1 PERCENT (ditto). Respondents were also asked which political party's candidate they would vote for. To this question, 31.7 PERCENT opted for the DPJ's (34.1 PERCENT in the last poll), with the LDP at 16.1 PERCENT, the same as in the last poll.

5) DPJ makes "five pledges" in manifesto: "Breakaway from bureaucrat-centered politics," "priority on livelihood"; revenue sources still unclear

MAINICHI (Top play) (Full)
July 28, 2009

Yu Koyama

Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) President Yukio Hatoyama held a news conference in Tokyo on July 27 to announce the party's manifesto (campaign pledges) for the House of Representatives election. He also presented a four-year policy road map which includes the

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implementation of a child allowance and toll free expressways as the centerpiece of the party's policy of "giving priority to the people's livelihood" from FY2010, the first fiscal year after the change of administration. The DPJ will work for breaking away from bureaucrat-controlled policymaking, and 16.8 trillion yen in policy spending for FY2013 will be funded with revenues derived mostly from eliminating wasteful spending. The party will go into the Lower House election without clarifying the concrete method of funding its policies. Hatoyama said that he will "take responsibility as a politician" if the pledges are not realized after he becomes prime minister.

Hatoyama stressed at the news conference that: "We will create politics where the people play the leading role to replace bureaucrat-led politics since the Meiji Restoration. This will be a historic turning point." The manifesto makes "five pledges" on reform in the following areas: (1) wasteful spending; (2) child care and education; (3) pension and medical insurance; (4) regional autonomy; and (5) employment and the economy. It also spells out the fiscal year for implementing the main policies and the required budget.

Policies to be implemented right away in FY2010 include: payout of 50 percent of the proposed child allowance of 26,000 yen (13,000 yen) per child per month until graduation from middle school; free high school education; abolition of temporary tax rates for gasoline and other taxes; and making some expressways toll free. Required funding is 7.1 trillion yen.

In FY2011, the full amount of child allowance will be paid out and income compensation for farming households will be implemented, and this will require 12.6 trillion yen in allocations. Expressways will become toll free in stages by FY2012, and appropriations required for FY2013, when the design of the new pension system will be completed, are estimated to be 16.8 trillion yen.

Proposed revenue sources include: 9.1 trillion yen from a "complete reshuffle" of the national government's general and special budget accounts totaling 207 trillion yen and elimination of wasteful spending; 5 trillion yen from the special accounts and other "buried treasures"; and 2.7 trillion yen from tax reforms.

The DPJ presented a "blueprint of the Hatoyama administration" which will shift from bureaucrat-led to politician-led policymaking. A "national strategy bureau" directly under the prime minister will be created to formulate a national vision and the basic policy for budget allocations. About 100 ruling party Diet members will be sent to the government as ministers, senior vice ministers, parliamentary secretaries and assistants to ministers to "unify" policymaking in the government and the ruling parties. An "administrative renovation council" consisting of politicians and experts will also be created under the "national strategy bureau" to examine all government projects and systems in order to rectify wastefulness and corruption.

6) DPJ plays up its stance of giving consideration for U.S.

ASAHI (Page 4) (Abridged slightly)
July 28, 2009

Kei Ukai

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In the part of diplomatic policy in its manifesto, the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) proclaims the establishment of a Japan-U.S.

alliance that is close and more equal. The DPJ has played up its stance of attaching importance to relations with the United States by adding the word "close" to an equal partnership in its policy index, announced on July 23, which served as the basis for its manifesto. The manifesto includes some room allowing the party to deal flexibly with a change of government, while stopping short of discussing detailed diplomatic policies.

Deputy Secretary General Yoshihiko Noda has recently emphasized a policy to cement relations with the United States first, saying, "We will stress the policy while forging relations of trust between 'prime minister' Hatoyama and President Barack Obama." The manifesto reflects such a trend. The DPJ indicated in its policy index that it will "continue to review the realignment of U.S. forces and the modality of U.S. bases in Japan." But in the manifesto, this expression has been watered down to "looking in the direction of review."

Like the policy index, the manifesto voids referring to the refueling operation in the Indian Ocean, to which the party has opposed. The party previously indicated that it will review the Japan-U.S. Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA). But the party repeated the expression "to present a revision" regarding the SOFA which was used in the policy index.

The U.S. government has a strong interest in both issues. Administrative Vice-Foreign Minister Mitoji Yabunaka said at a press conference yesterday, "I expect each government will deal with those matters based on diplomatic continuity." Diplomacy comes out ninth out of the 21 items in the policy index. While in the manifesto, diplomacy comes after the seventh item. As a result of giving priority to domestic affairs and livelihood-oriented fields that are directly connected to the upcoming election, the gravity of foreign policy has declined in relative terms.

7) Concept of building "more equal Japan-U.S. relationship" loses significance

MAINICHI (Page 2) (Abridged slightly)
July 28, 2009

Takenori Noguchi

Diplomacy and security did not make "five pledges" in the Democratic Party of Japan's (DPJ) manifesto. Although a separate item pledging to contribute to the world by means of independent diplomacy was set up, the manifesto remains in the realm of abstract expressions, such as to "build a close and more equal Japan-U.S. alliance by establishing an independent diplomatic strategy."

The DPJ announced on July 17 its policy index for 2009, which served as the foundation for its manifesto. The policy index proclaimed the establishment of a Japan-U.S. alliance of a new age, while indicating to present a revision to the Japan-U.S. Status of Forces Agreement and to continue to review the modality of U.S. force realignment and the U.S. bases in Japan. At that point, the DPJ retracted from its 2008 policy index which claimed to begin a drastic revision to the SOFA. In its manifesto, the party has further watered down that expression to "face a direction of review."

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The diplomatic stance of achieving a more equal Japan-U.S. relationship has been emphasized by the DPJ since it was led by Ichiro Ozawa in a bid to differentiate itself from the LDP-New Komeito administration. A DPJ executive commented: "We have to say things more clearly based on Japan's national interests, and bilateral relations must be made more transparent. That's the difference with the LDP." But as a change of government has become a possible reality, the concrete contents of a more equal Japan-U.S. partnership have now watered down and driven into insignificance in the manifesto.

8) Consideration to U.S. evident in DPJ manifesto

In its manifesto for the upcoming general election, the Democratic Party of Japan's (DPJ) shifted its conventional hard-line stance to a pragmatic policy line by toning down its call for revising the Japan-U.S. Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) and taking flexible measures. The party apparently gave consideration to the growing concerns about the effect of its stance on Japan-U.S. relations if a DPJ government is launched. But such issues as dispatch of Self-Defense Force (SDF) troops overseas may cause a joint struggle among opposition parties.

The DPJ manifesto features its consideration to the U.S. It specifies the bilateral alliance as the "cornerstone of Japan's foreign policy." Although it made no reference to the Maritime Self-Defense Force's mission of refueling warships from the U.S. and other countries in the Indian Ocean, the manifesto pledges to "perform Japan's role in a positive manner while sharing roles with the U.S." Under president Ichiro Ozawa, the DPJ was opposed to the refueling operation as violating the Constitution.

With respect to SOFA, too, the manifesto rewrites its conventional assertion from "starting review" into "advocating review." The U.S. is said to be extremely cautious about reviewing the Japan-U.S. agreement, fearing its effect on other SOFAs with other countries.

The proposal to conclude a Japan-U.S. free trade agreement (FTA) under the context of the Japan-U.S. alliance is also expected to cause a stir. If Japan concludes an FTA with the U.S., Japanese farmers will inevitably raise objections. Vice Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Minister Michio Ide expressed his concern about the proposal during a press conference yesterday, saying: "Almost all farm products could be affected."

Concerning the planned transfer of the U.S. Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station, the manifesto stops short of referring to its conventional call for relocating the facility to somewhere outside Okinawa Prefecture. But Policy Research Council Chairman Masayuki Naoshima said in a press briefing yesterday: "Our policy stance remains unchanged." The U.S. has no intention to alter its current plan to transfer the facility within the prefecture.

The manifesto also includes measures to carry out cargo inspections of ships from and to North Korea as part of efforts to strengthen sanctions against North Korea, and reveals a willingness to address antipiracy measures in waters off Somalia. However, the Social Democratic Party, with which the DPJ hopes to form a coalition if it

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seizes the reins of government, remains cautious about SDF overseas dispatch. Foreign and security policies might become a shackle on the efforts to form a coalition government.

9) DPJ releases manifesto: Challenge is to secure funding resources

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 9) (Abridged slightly)
July 28, 2009

The Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) has released a manifesto, which includes a number of policies intended to reduce the public financial burden. The manifesto notes that fiscal resources to finance those policies will be secured through the eradication of wasteful spending. However, it lacks specific explanations. The challenge to the DPJ, which now has the assumption of power in sight, is how to address criticism that it is simply tossing around pork-barrel largesse.

Referring to funding resources, President Hatoyama underscored at a press conference that since the party has probed the necessity of spending items and suspended or put off those with low necessity after close examination, its proposals have not been made in an irresponsible manner.

According to the roadmap for key policies incorporated in the manifesto, necessary expenses will reach 7.1 trillion yen in the

fiscal 2010 budget and 16.8 trillion yen in the fiscal 2013 budget.

Fiscal resources are to be tapped to subsidies given to independent administrative agencies, special public corporations, etc., cuts in public servants' labor costs and the use of so-called Kasumigaseki hidden funds (maizokin). Noting that focus will be on thoroughgoing efforts to eliminate wasteful expenditures, the manifesto pledges that the party will discuss the sales tax hike issue, but there will be no hike for the next four years.

However, "forces of resistance" will challenge this stance. Local governments, which are suffering from economic decline, are bound to oppose cuts in public works. The proposal for cutting public servants' labor costs and reduction in force could make government office-affiliated labor unions, the DPJ's support base, stop supporting the DPJ.

According to the manifesto, since the DPJ will dig into bureaucrats' vested interests, such as amakudari (golden parachute) practices, independent administrative agencies and special public corporations are certain to fiercely resist the proposal. A senior finance ministry official checked the proposal, noting, "Since the DPJ is aiming to become a ruling party, we want it to come up with specific points about the reform."

Providing detailed explanations on an increase in financial burden is indispensable, instead of just presenting a rosy future. For instance, the establishment of child allowances is to be implemented concurrently with the abolition of allowance for spouse and allowance for dependent, meaning a tax increase for married couples without children. Making highways toll-free requires a switch of resources to repay debts inherited from the now-defunct Japan Highway Public Corporation from income from tolls to tax revenues.

10) DPJ manifest features shift away from bureaucracy-oriented politics

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SANKEI (Page 5) (Abridged slightly)
July 28, 2009

The Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) on July 27 released a manifesto (campaign pledges) for the upcoming Lower House election. It incorporates an "administration initiative" envisaging the launch of a Hatoyama administration, highlighting a shift away from bureaucracy-oriented politics. According to the campaign platform, the existing power relationship between Kasumigaseki (Japan's bureaucratic center) and political parties will likely change drastically, as 100 lawmakers of the ruling party will be appointed to posts in government agencies. Meanwhile, the party's stance toward security and decentralization has retreated significantly from its previous one, blurring the image of the administration it is aiming for.

Cabinet minister to be appointed as national strategy bureau director general

The Hatoyama administration initiative puts forward five principles for a government led by politicians and five policy measures to achieve that end. President Hatoyama at a press briefing held after the announcement of the manifesto, stressed, "We will change the nature of politics from bureaucracy-oriented politics to politics led by politicians."

In particular, the party has placed emphasis on revising the current double power structure between the government and the ruling parties. Should the DPJ take the reins of government, it will abolish the "Next Cabinet," the current policy-making organ of the party. Decision-making authority will be centralized under a cabinet council joined by cabinet ministers, including prime minister Hatoyama.

The policy platform also notes that 100 DPJ lawmakers will be appointed as ministers, senior vice ministers, parliamentary secretaries, and advisor to cabinet ministers at each government

agency. These lawmakers will take charge of the government's decision-making jointly with the bureaucracy in an integrated manner.

The national strategy bureau to be set up directly under the prime minister will be responsible for mapping out basic policies on budgets and foreign relations. Hatoyama at the press briefing on the 27th announced a plan to appoint a cabinet minister as the bureau's director general. The manifesto notes that competent personnel both from the public and private sectors will be appointed as bureau officials.

However, concerning the size of the organization and the ratio between bureaucrats and private-sector personnel, Policy Affairs Research Council Chairman Masayuki Naoshima simply said, "We still need to finalize the details."

Consideration given to relations with U.S.

The DPJ's manifesto for the Upper House election, released in 2007, was laced with key words critical of the government's policy toward the U.S., such as "Self-Defense Force (SDF) personnel should pull out of Iraq" or "the U.S. Forces Japan (USFJ) realignment program does not give consideration to the people."

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The party toned down its wording in the manifesto released yesterday, as can be seen by a change from "we will thoroughly pursue problems" of the USFJ realignment program to "we will tackle the issue with the possibility of revising it." The manifesto does not touch on refueling operation in the Indian Ocean by SDF personnel even though the party has been opposed to extending the operation. This reflects that the party has given consideration to Japan's relations with the U.S.

Regarding policy changes the DPJ has made, Hatoyama underscored, "Those changes are consistent with our previous stance. Our stance has evolved." However, the DPJ's blueprint regarding how it will handle the issue of refueling operations in the Indian Ocean after taking the reins of government remains unclear.

Hatoyama has been characterizing decentralization as a campaign issue. The proposal included in the DPJ's manifesto for the Upper House election that the nation's administrative districts should be divided into about 300 basic autonomous bodies was not included in the manifesto released this time.

11) DPJ eyes switch to political initiative

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Abridged)
July 28, 2009

The Democratic Party of Japan (Minshuto) yesterday released its manifesto or campaign pledges for the forthcoming election for the House of Representatives. The DPJ manifesto says about 100 Diet members will enter the government as cabinet ministers, senior vice ministers, or parliamentary secretaries. In addition, a "national strategy bureau," directly under the prime minister's control, will outline the budget. The DPJ has thus declared a switch to decision-making under powerful political leadership. DPJ President Yukio Hatoyama met the press and highlighted "people-led government" and "post-bureaucracy." However, the DPJ is also expected to face difficulties.

"We will create a new style of politics. We will also have to change the modality of governance from bureaucracy initiative to political initiative." With this, Hatoyama made promoted his idea of powerful political leadership in his press remarks.

The DPJ manifesto first specifies a set of "five principles," such as "government under the initiative of politicians with the governing parties assuming responsibility instead of leaving everything to bureaucrats" and "Japan's national interests under the initiative of the prime minister's office rather than each ministry's interests under its bureaucratic sectionalism" Under the

five principles, the DPJ sets forth "five policies" as a new mechanism under the political initiative assumed for Hatoyama and his government.

What is symbolic of the DPJ manifesto is sending about 100 lawmakers to the government. They will serve as cabinet ministers, senior vice ministers, parliamentary secretaries, or cabinet ministerial assistants. Each cabinet minister, senior vice minister, and parliamentary secretary at government ministries and agencies will take the initiative to plan and coordinate policies and will make decisions.

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If there is an issue that needs interdepartmental coordination among government ministries and agencies, relevant cabinet ministers will coordinate it in a "cabinet ministerial committee." From the prime minister's office, the chief cabinet secretary will join the committee. The prime minister will arbitrate as needed. The DPJ will abolish the conference of administrative vice ministers from all government ministries and agencies or a subcabinet-level decision-making body, so the cabinet ministerial committee's decisions will be "cabinet decisions."

The process of making policy decisions will basically be unified under the government's internal coordination. In the case of reforming the tax system, for example, government and ruling party leaders will become the government's tax commission members to make policy decisions. In the case of establishing a coalition government with the Social Democratic Party and the People's New Party as well, that coalition government, based on intra-cabinet cooperation, will make policy decisions internally, not on an interparty basis.

In addition, the DPJ is also planning to revamp the prime minister's office and its leadership. The DPJ, for instance, eyes establishing a "national strategy bureau," which is a body of human resources from government and private circles and is to be directly under the prime minister's control. This strategy bureau will outline the government's national visions and fiscal budgets under the initiative of the prime minister's office. The Council on Economic and Fiscal Policy will be abolished. "The national strategy bureau's director general is like the chair of a political party's policy board and is a cabinet minister who is most familiar with policies," Hatoyama said, indicating his intention to appoint a cabinet minister to the post of national strategy bureau director general.

12) Pundits' comments on DPJ policy manifesto for Aug. 30 general election

NIKKEI (Page 3) (Full)
July 28, 2009

Security policy - lack of specifics on necessary revenues: Wataru Suzuki, professor at Gakushuin University

The manifesto unveiled by the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) gives us an impression that the party plans to lavishly spend money to fund social security measures while leaving untouched the question of where the financial sources will come from. A considerable amount of revenues will be needed to finance the proposal to provide guaranteed minimum pension benefits. If the revenue source issue continues to be set aside, the proposed program will surely go under before long. It is necessary to learn how much money self-employed people and others have earned, because some might pass the pension benefits to private pension payments. The bill will be passed onto the younger generation. The proposed child-raising allowance is also a typical pork-barrel-type measure and is an ineffective way of spending money.

Political reform - Use bureaucracy efficiently: Harutaka Takenaka, associate professor of National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies

The party has pledged to set up a national strategy bureau. If this body becomes larger, "bureaucrats in the bureau" will be unavoidably created. In order for the prime minister to assume leadership, a

system to support the prime minister will be needed. To realize a government led by politicians, the awareness of the need to use bureaucrats effectively is essential. The party proposes sending 100 Diet members to ministries and agencies, but they must be well-versed in policies. I understand the importance of the proposed ban on civil servants' amakudari (golden parachuting) practice and the practice of retired government officials going from one company to another as executives, but it is also necessary to consider ways to hire and retain excellent bureaucrats as a measure to prevent the outflow of capable persons.

Macroeconomic policy - speak of people's pain: Ryutaro Kawano, economist of BNP Paribas Security Japan

The manifesto pledges to give priority to the viewpoint of ordinary citizens in carrying out politics, and this merits appreciation, compared with the nation's conventional policy stance shackled by vested interests. A reduction in public uneasiness is expected to contribute to boosting consumer spending. However, if the party has no intention to raise taxes, cutting expenditures to generate financial resources will become necessary. The party should explain what expenditures must be cut and speak of the public's pain. The manifesto presents no long- and mid-term growth strategy and makes light of market mechanisms. This point is unsatisfactory. The manifesto does not focus on deregulation and improvement in companies' productivity, either.

Foreign policy - unclear approach in SOFA negotiations: Tomohito Shinoda, professor at International University of Japan

The manifesto underscores the stance of giving priority to the Japan-U.S. alliance and comes up with practical foreign and security policies. This merits appreciation. But it is unclear with what approach the party intends to negotiate such issues as a review of the Japan-U.S. Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) with the U.S. Regarding a review of the U.S. forces realignment plan agreed on between Japan and the U.S., as well, its stance remains ambiguous. It also proposes concluding a Japan-U.S. free trade agreement (FTA). This idea draws attention. The bottleneck is how to treat agricultural products, but if the party is considering promoting FTA negotiations in order to introduce an income indemnity system for individual farming households, this proposal is said to be very pragmatic.

13) LDP, New Komeito condemn DPJ manifesto

MAINICHI (Page 2) (Abridged slightly)
July 28, 2009

Prime Minister Taro Aso criticized yesterday the Democratic Party of Japan's (DPJ) manifesto (campaign pledges), saying: "It's irresponsible, and extremely ambiguous. A pork-barrel story that sounds pleasant is quite dangerous. The Prime Minister also made the following comment about the DPJ's security policy, "Lack of consistency in the most important issues will be extremely dangerous for the security of Japan." He was speaking to the press corps at his official residence.

Meanwhile, Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) Secretary General Hiroyuki Hosoda told reporters at party headquarters yesterday: "Spending alone is too optimistic. The question of funding resources must be examined."

The creation of a child allowance is specified in the manifesto of the DPJ despite the fact that the party has opposed the idea of improving the child-support allowance system. New Komeito Representative Akihiro Ota in an interview by the Mainichi Shimbun and other news companies commented on this fact, "(The DPJ's) policies change all the time. The events that have occurred up until now must be reviewed squarely."

14) LDP to include in manifesto pledge to increase household income by 1 million yen by 2020

YOMIURI (Page 1) (Full)
July 28, 2009

Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) Secretary General Hiroyuki Hosoda told the press corps at the party's headquarters yesterday that the LDP will make the main policy of its manifesto a pledge to increase average disposable household income by more than 1 million yen by 2020. Hosoda said that the LDP will include specific policy measures in its manifesto (set of campaign pledges) for the upcoming House of Representatives election.

A senior LDP member said: "It will be able to cover disposable household incomes that drastically decreased in ten years," by easing the household burden by making child education free, improving support of women giving birth to return to their jobs, consolidating the work environment for the elderly, and implementing steadily economic stimulus measures.

Hosoda also revealed that the LDP intends to release its manifesto as early as July 31.

Meanwhile, the LDP has decided to stipulate in its manifesto a pledge to make the establishment of a consultative organ for representatives of central and local governments a legal requirement.

15) LDP wary about Aso's making gaffes

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July 28, 2009

Senior Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) members are becoming increasingly nervous about Prime Minister Taro Aso's latest remark, which is not much difference than a gaffe, made in a speech in Yokohama City. He said: "Elderly people have no talent other than working." LDP leaders have a heightened sense of alarm toward the possibility of Aso's habit of making gaffes forcing the LDP face an uphill battle in the upcoming House of Representatives election.

Aso made the gaffe at a meeting on July 25 of Junior Chamber International Japan. Although he tried to say that he would revitalize the economy by promoting employment of the elderly, Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) President was quick to criticize Aso. Aso therefore offered an apology in a speech delivered in Sendai City later that day, saying: "I gave a false impression."

Aso apologized in a meeting of the LDP before dissolving the Lower House, saying: "My remarks led to lower support rates of the LDP." Chief Cabinet Secretary Takeo Kawamura has received many calls from LDP candidates for the general election, with one candidate saying: "I want the chief cabinet secretary to take care of the prime

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minister." Kawamura then gave Aso an earful, saying: "I want you to continue to feel the tension."

The LDP had bitter experiences in recent national elections caused by remarks by prime ministers.

In the 2000 Lower House election, the Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori said five days before the election: "I want voters, who are indifferent in the election, to sleep at home." The observation was that his remark instead forced unaffiliated voters cast their votes for opposition parties.

In July 2004, then Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, who enjoyed high popularity, came under criticism for his remark: "There are all kinds of people (all kinds of companies and all kinds of employees)," when he was pursued at the Diet. In the House of Councillors election held about one month later Koizumi's remark, the LDP was defeated by the DPJ.

16) Yokohama Mayor Nakata considering forming new party, not seeking

third term

SANKEI (Page 5) (Full)
July 28, 2009

Yokohama Mayor Hiroshi Nakata, 44, who will be serving out his second term next April, has decided not to seek another term, it was learned on July 27. Nakata will announce his intention at a press conference to be held soon.

The reasons for his decision reportedly include his prospects for formulating measures for the city's fiscal reconstruction and his intention to concentrate on activities toward forming a political organization with Hiroshi Yamada, mayor of Suginami Ward in Tokyo. He apparently will not run in the forthcoming House of Representatives election on Aug. 30.

Nakata is also looking into forming a new party together with other mayors in favor of reforms.

Nakata was first elected in 1993 to the Diet as a Lower House member. He is now serving in his second term as Yokohama mayor since he was elected in April 2002.

ZUMWALT